

Message Text

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SUBJECT: FOREIGN PRODUCT STANDARDS AND CERTIFICATION SYSTEMS

REF: STATE 182572

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. THIS CABLE RESPONDS TO QUESTIONS CONTAINED
REFTEL ON ORGANIZATIONS AND PROCEDURES INVOLVED IN ESTABLISHMENT OF
MANDATORY STANDARDS, TEST METHODS, AND CERTIFICATION IN CZECHOSLOVAKI
A
FOR USE OF USBLL IN NTM DISCUSSION IN SEPTEMBER. END SUMMARY.

2. CZECHOSLOVAK OFFICE FOR STANDARDS AND MEASUREMENTS (COSM -- IN
CZECH, URAD PRO NORMALIZACE I MERENR), FEDERAL MINISTRY OF
METALLURGY AND HEAVY ENGINEERING, AND FEDERAL MINISTRY OF GENERAL
ENGINEERING ARE GOVERNMENT AGENCIES CHIEFLY RESPONSIBLE FOR DERERMING
MANDATORY NATIONAL STANDARDS. COSM COORDINATES ALL STANDARDS-
MAKING ACTIVITIES IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA, ISSUES FORMALLY ALL NATIONAL
STANDARDS, AND COLLATES AND PUBLISHES THEM. FOLLOWING PARAGRAPHS
RESPOND IN MORE DETAIL TO QUESTIONS RAISED PARA FIVE, A(2), (3),
(4) REFTEL.

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3. COSM OFFICIAL STATED THAT THERE ARE 13,000 MANDATORY NATIONAL STANDARDS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND 8,000 BRANCH STANDARDS. LATTER APPLY ONLY TO PARTICULAR INDUSTRIES OR PRODUCT GROUPS, BUT THEY ARE MANDATORY FOR INDUSTRIES TO WHICH THEY APPLY. COSM ESTIMATES THAT 50 PERCENT OF ALL CZECHOSLOVAK STANDARDS APPLY TO ENGINEERING AND ELECTRICAL GOODS, 12 PERCENT TO AGRICULTURE AND FOOD PRODUCTS, AND 20 PERCENT TO CHECMICALS.

4. CZECHOSLOVAKIA IS MEMBER OF INTERNATIONSL STANDARDS ORGANIZATION, AND HAS ADOPTED ABOUT 60 PERCENT OF ISO STANDARDS. COSM REQUIRES THAT ANY PROPOSED DEVIATION FROM ISO STANDARDS BE STRICTLY JUSTIFIED. COSM OFFICIALS STATED THAT CZECHOSLOVAKIA BASICALLY ACCEPTS IEC STANDARDS. CZECHOSLOVAKIA IS ALSO MEMBER OF INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE ON RULES FOR APPROVAL OF ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT (CEE). IN SOME CASES, CZECHOSLOVAKIA HAS MADE SAFETY STANDARDS MANDATORY WHEREAS THEY ARE ONLY RECOMMENDED BY CEE. CZECHSOLOVAKIA IS NOT, HOWEVER, MEMBER OF CEN OR CENELEC, WHICH COSM OFFICIALS DESCRIBED AS EXCLUSIVELY WEST EUROPEAN BODIES. CZECHOSLOVAKIA IS MEMBER OF SIMILAR GROUPINGS UNDER CEMA UMBRELLA, AND OBSERVES THEIR STANDARDS. COSM HAS A VERY HIGH OPINION OF THE ASTM STANDARDS DEVELOPED IN THE U.S., AND HAS ADOPTED THEM. COSM ALSO ACCEPTS ASTM TEST RESULTS.

5. CZECHOSLOVAK STANDARDS GENERALLY REFLECT A CONSENSUS REACHED THROUGH CONSULTATIONS BETWEEN MANUFACTURES, CONSUMERS (ORGANIZATIONS, AS OPPOSED TO PERSONS), AND RESEARCH INSTITUTES. COSM THEN GIVES FINAL APPROVAL, AND ISSUES STANDARDS FORMALLY. FOREIGN FIRMS HAVE NO OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON PROPOSED STANDARDS: IN THEORY THEIR INTERESTS ARE PROTECTED BY CZECHOSLOVAK FOREIGN TRADE CORPORATIONS, WHO ARE SUPPOSED TO ADVISE IF A PROPOSED STANDARD WOULD BE UNDULY ONEROUS FOR FOREIGN SUPPLIERS TO MEET.

6. FOREIGN TRADE CORPORATIONS HAVE THE AUTHROITY TO WAIVE PERFORMANCE AND QUALITY CONTROLS TESTS, TO ACCEPT WORD OF A FOREIGN SUPPLIER THAT EQUIPMENT MEETS ISO OR OTHER STANDARDS, AND TO ACCEPT THE RESULTS OF PERFORMANCE TESTS CARRIED OUT IN COUNTRY OF EXPORTER. IT IS COMMON FOR A WAIVER TO BE GRANTED IF MANUFACTURER OF PRODUCT IN QUESTION HAS LONG-TERM, SATISFACTORY TRADING RELATIONSHIP WITH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CZECHOSLOVAK FIRMS, AND HASGAINED THEIR CONFIDENCE. REGULATIONS REQUIRE, HOWEVER, THAT ALL SAFETY AND HYGIENE TESTS BE CARRIED OUT AT CZECHOSLOVAK TEST STATIONS.

7. THERE ARE 43 TEST STATIONS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA; THREE OF THEM PERTAINING DIRECTLY TO COSM. COSM EXERCISES POLICY, BUT NOT ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROL, OVER REMAINING 40. ELEVEN TEST STATIONS CARRY OUT SAFETY AND HYGIENE TESTS; 32 DO QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE

TESTS. THERE ARE A FEW RECIPROCAL AGREEMENTS BETWEEN CZECH-SLOVAK TEST STATIONS AND FOREIGN TEST STATIONS. THE ONLY CONCRETE EXAMPLE COSM OFFICIALS WERE ABLE TO CITE, HOWEVER, COVERED TESTING OF METALLURGICAL INSTRUMENTS. THERE ARE OTHER RECIPROCAL TESTING AGREEMENTS THAT OPERATE WITHIN THE CEE FRAMEWORK, FOR CERTAIN ELECTRICAL PRODUCTS. COSM OFFICIALS WERE AT PAINS TO POINT OUT THAT AGREEMENTS ARE TRULY RECIPROCAL, I.E., CZECHOSLOVAK TEST RESULTS ARE ACCEPTED IN WESTERN COUNTRIES AS WELL. THERE HAVE BEEN ATTEMPTS TO INSTITUTE A CEMA-WIDE QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM, BUT RESULTS HAVE BEEN MINIMAL. THERE ARE ALSO A FEW BILATERAL AGREEMENTS WITH POLAND, BULGARIA, AND HUNGARY THAT COVER A LIMITED RANGE OF PRODUCTS.

8. EMBASSY HAS OBTAINED SEVERAL DOCUMENTS ON SUBJECT OF STANDARDS, INCLUDING ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF QUALITY CONTROL LAW. WE EXPECT TO RECEIVE OTHER DOCUMENTS SOON, AND WILL FORWARD ALL TO DEPARTMENT UNDER COVER OF AIRGRAM WHEN RECEIVED.

9. THE EMBASSY OBTAINED ALL FOREGOING INFORMATION FROM COSM OFFICIALS. THESE GENTLEMAN, WHILE PLEASANT AND HELPFUL, NATURALLY ATTEMPTED TO PUT THEMSELVES, THEIR ORGANIZATIONS, AND THE WHOLE CZECHOSLOVAK SYSTEM OF STANDARDS AND TESTING PROCEDURES IN THE BEST POSSIBLE LIGHT. THE SUBJECTIVE OPINIONS OF EMBASSY OFFICERS, BASED ON THEIR PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE AND OBSERVATIONS, IS THAT ENFORCEMENT OF STANDARDS IS UNEVEN. IT DOES SEEM THAT SAFETY STANDARDS ARE RATHER STRICT FOR ELECTRICAL TOOLS. ON THE OTHER HAND, AIR AND WATER POLLUTION STANDARDS, ALTHOUGH A MATTER OF INCREASINGLY SERIOUS CONCERN TO GOVERNMENT, ARE NOT YET EFFECTIVE. FINALLY, COSM OFFICIALS ADMIT THAT WHEREAS ALL STANDARDS ARE MANDATORY, ONLY 14 PERCENT OF ALL CZECHOSLOVAK PRODUCT GROUPS UNDERGO PERFORMANCE TESTING, AND ONLY SIX PERCENT UNDERGO SAFETY TESTING.

PERRY

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